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**How to Combine a Successful**

**Journalistic Career with**

**An Orthodox Lifestyle**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Inspiration for the Nation host Yaakov Langer interviewing Israel’s popular journalist Sivan Rahav-Meir.**

Released earlier this week was a podcast interview that Yaakov Langer, host of the Living L’Chaim – Inspiration for the Nation conducted with Sivan Rahav-Meir, Israel’s popular journalist, lecturer and media personality. The zoom interview was conducted with Langer in New York and Rahav-Meir in Yerushalayim.

Born in 1981, she has become one of the most prominent voices in Israeli media, known for her insightful commentary and thoughtful analysis of current events. Meir began her career as a journalist in the Israel Defense Forces Radio station, where she worked as a reporter and anchor.

**A Sought-After Public Speaker**

She later joined the Israeli television station Channel 2, where she worked as a political correspondent and news anchor. Today, Meir is a columnist for the Israeli newspaper Makor Rishon and serves as a commentator on Israeli television and radio programs. She is also a sought-after public speaker, known for her engaging and inspiring talks on topics such as Jewish identity, Israeli society, and the power of the individual to effect change in the world.

Some of interesting points that Sivan Rahav-Meir related to Langer include how at the age of 15 having grown up in a completely secular assimilated home, her future turned on a dime when three girls in her community invited her to come over for a Shabbat experience. She explained that she was completely taken by the immense spiritual beauty of that Shabbat experience which inspired her to begin studying Judaism and became a young baalat teshuvah who today speaks about how important Yahadut (Judaism) is to her and the Jewish people. Every week her remarks are transcribed into a column that appears in The Jewish Press and other venues.

**The Power of a Simple Shabbos Invitation**

An interesting point that Mrs. Rahav-Meir who lives in Jerusalem with her husband and five children made in the podcast interview with Langer is how just a simple invitation to come an experience a Shabbat so dramatically changed her life. She tries to invite others to her home to also enjoy the unique and powerful spiritual beauty of the Shabbat.

Another interesting take from Langer’s interview was his question as to what challenges Sivan Rahav-Meir might have to deal with in trying to stay loyal to her Orthodox lifestyle while working six days a week in her highly successful career as a television and radio commentator.

Mrs. Rahav-Meir recalled as examples of challenges that constantly pop up for example, the time one Motzoi Shabbat that she was asked to interview a Jewish personality who happened to be in the United States. She explained to her producer that although the interview would not be a desecration of Shabbat for her, she would be a vehicle towards causing another Jew in the United States where it was still Shabbos to desecrate the holy day. Despite the fact that her producers couldn’t comprehend the complexities of her theological position, Sivan Rahav-Meir held fast to her principles and refused to conduct that Saturday night interview.

A second example of her not compromising her loyalty to Orthodox Judaic principles occurred when on a television program, she was asked to announce a mazel tov to an Israeli celebrity who had just gotten engaged to an American celebrity who was however not Jewish. Mrs. Rahav-Meir shocked the producers by absolutely refusing to congratulate that famous Israeli Jew who was planning to intermarry. When word got out to others in the media of her refusal to offer that mazal tov, she was publicly shamed as being a “racist” but that has not shaken her from the conviction that she did the right thing.

If you would like to view or listen to the entire one hour and two-minute podcast you can google **My Journal to Orthodoxy & Israel's Top News Anchor - Sivan Rahav-Meir or** <https://youtu.be/AJjrBwXTxLI>

**Thoughts that Count for Parshat Bamidbar**

Our Sages note that the giving of the Torah at Sinai required the presence of all 600,000 Jews; if just one had been missing, the Torah would not have been given. These verses are always read in the portin of Bamdibar before Shavuot, the day on which the Torah was given, to remind us of this principle. Furthermore, it reminds us that it was not enough for all Jews to be present; it was necessary that the Jewish people be united in love for one another. “Israel camped there [before Mount Sinai] as one man with one mind.” This peace and unity is the channel for all Divine blessings, including the greatest of all – the coming of Moshiach. (Peninei HaGeula)

All that were numbered of the Levites...were 22,000 (Num. 3:39)

The tribe of Levi was the smallest in population of all the Jewish tribes. Not subject to the Egyptian enslavement with the rest of the Israelites, the Levites increased in a natural manner. The other tribes, by contrast, were blessed with a superna tural fertility, and the more Pharaoh tried to annihilate them, the more Jews were born. (Ramban)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Bamidbar 5760/2000 edition of L’Chaim, a weekly publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**The Connection Between Quantity and Quality and the Importance of Every Single Jew**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



The first mitzva in the Book of Bamidbar is the commandment to count the Jewish people: "Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel." Because of this commandment, Bamidbar is also known as the Book of Numbers.

When objects are counted, the resulting tally is not an expression of their unique content. On the contrary, the particular characteristics of the objects being counted don't matter. Every item counts for one, no more and no less. A count thus represents only quantity, without regard for quality. Indeed, the commandment to count the Jews did not take into consideration their individual differences. Why, then, does the Torah consider this census so significant that the name of the entire Book is derived from it?

**A Counted Object Can Never be Nullified**

One explanation is the principle that "an object that has been counted cannot be nullified"; the very act of counting imbues it with worth and significance. But this explanation alone is insufficient, as counting objects only touches upon their most superficial aspect, without regard for their true quality.

However, a strong cause and effect relationship exists between quantity and quality. In fact, a sufficient quantity can generate an improvement in the quality of the items being counted! A prime example of this is the concept of the minyan, a quorum of ten Jewish men. Although a minyan is an expression of quantity, without regard for the individual characteristics of the participants, once it is assembled a new entity is formed. The Divine Presence rests on a minyan, and the Torah may be read, certain prayers recited, etc.

**A Very Special Blessing – “The Wise One of Enigmas”**

Another example of the connection between quantity and quality is found in the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The Torah was revealed in the presence of the entire Jewish people - men, women and children. Had even one individual been absent, the Torah could not have been given. That is why our Sages instituted a special blessing, "the Wise One of enigmas," to be recited when the entire Jewish people is gathered together.

From this we learn that numbers are indeed important, especially in our times, when quantity is actually more important that quality. With so many Jews crying out for spiritual meaning in their lives, an effort must be made to enable as many Jews as possible to perform practical mitzvot.

In fact, the emphasis must be precisely on quantity, for the more Jews strengthen their connection with G-d and celebrate their identity, the more elevated the spiritual quality of the entire Jewish people will be, which will in turn lead to the Final Redemption with Moshiach.

Reprinted from the Parshat Bamidbar 5760/2000 edition of L’Chaim. Adapted from Volume 2 of Likutei Sichot.

**Every Jew Serves in G-d’s Army**

Take the sum (literally “lift up the head”) of all the congregation of the Children of Israel (Num. 1:2)

Why is this command to count the Jewish people referred to as “lifting up the head”?

Because through this census every Jew became a member of G-d’s Army, a Jewish soldier dedicated body and soul to the service of the Creator. And in truth, is there any higher calling? (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Bamidbar 5760/2000 edition of L’Chaim, a weekly publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Bamidbar 5783**



The book of Bamidbar is perhaps one of the saddest, so to speak, of all of the Holy Scriptures. Whereas the book of Shemot, which records for us the sin of the Golden Calf also gives us pause, it concludes with the final construction of the Mishkan and G-d’s Presence, so to speak, resting within the encampment of Israel. But the book of Bamidbar, which begins on a high note of numerical accomplishment and the seemingly imminent entry of the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, ends on a very sour note. It records the destruction of the entire generation including its leadership without their entrance into the Promised Land.

The narrative of the book of Bamidbar tells us of rebellion and constant carping, military defeats and victories, false blessings, human prejudices, and personal bias. But the Torah warned us in its very first chapters that “this is the book of human beings.” And, the weaknesses exhibited by Israel in the desert of Sinai, as recorded for us in the book of Bamidbar, are definitely part of the usual human story and nature.

Over the decades that I have taught this book of Bamidbar to students and congregants of mine, invariably many of them have then asked me incredulously: ”How could the Jewish people have behaved in such a manner?” I cannot speak for that generation of Jews as described in the book of Bamidbar, but I wonder to myself “How can so many Jews in our generation relate to the existence of the State of Israel in our time so cavalierly?

How do we tolerate the cruelties that our one-size-fits-all school system inflicts on the ‘different’ child? How do we subject our daughters to the indignities of the current matchmaking process? How, indeed!?” And my answer to myself lways is that for the great many of us, human nature trumps common sense, logic, and true Torah values. I imagine that this may have been true of the generation of the book of Bamidbar as well.

One of the wonders of the book of Bamidbar is that the count of the Jewish people at the end of the forty years of living in the desert was almost exactly the same as it was at the beginning of their sojourn there. Though the following is certainly not being proposed by me as an answer or explanation to this unusual fact, I have always thought that this is a subtle reminder to us that that no matter how great the experiences, no matter how magnificent the miracles, no matter how great the leaders, human nature, with all its strengths and weaknesses, basically remains the same.

It is not only that the numbers don’t change much, the people and the generations didn’t and don’t change much either. Human nature remains constant. But our task is to recognize that and channel our human nature into productive and holy actions and behavior – to bend to a nobility of will and loyalty. Only by recognizing the propensity of our nature will we be able to accomplish this necessary and noble goal.

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Seeing a Gentile King**

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**QUESTION:** The gemara says לעולם ירוץ אדם לקראת מלכי ישראל ולקראת מלכי עכו״ם, that a person should go out to see the kings and even the gentile kings (Brachos 19b, 58a). So, when President Clinton is going to make a visit to the local frum community is it advisable that we should go see him?

**ANSWER:** The Gemara says לעולם ירוץ אדם לקראת מלכים – that even to a gentile king you should run to greet them. What’s the purpose?

Of course, it is a chiyuv for darkei shalom to show honor to a gentile king too; it’s an obligation for the ‘ways of peace’ – we should make sure to have peaceful relations with our gentile neighbors. But it says ירוץ, you should run to do it. Yarutz means it is a mitzvah to run. And the gemara says the reason: שאם יזכה – if you’ll merit to be there when Moshiach will come so then you’ll see the difference.

Here’s a great king coming, a gentile king, and the band is playing music and there are uniformed soldiers. You are very much impressed, terribly impressed!

So, when you will see Moshiach come, then you will see it was nothing. It is lo klum, mamash gornisht, nothing at all. Moshiach will come and it will be a tremendous grandeur and you will see that all the greatness of the goyim is lo klum compared to the greatness that will be on that day when Moshiach will come.

*Reprinted from a recent Toras Avigdor email based on Rabbi Miller’s Tape # E-261 from a classic Thursday night lecture in January 2001..*

**When Bad Things**

**Happen to Good People**

**By Rabbi Gershon Schusterman**

***How to Believe in Heaven When it Hurts Like Hell***



Rabbi Harold Kushner, the author of the 1981 bestseller “When Bad Things Happen to Good People,” has died at 88. Kushner wrote this book—still talked about today—after his son tragically passed away at age 14 from progeria, a disease that causes premature aging. The pain of this loss prompted the rabbi to write this book as a consoling aid to others also struggling through unexpected and devastating loss.

Kushner’s thesis was that bad things happen to good people simply because G-d didn’t have control over all the evil in this world. He wrote, "G-d does not, and cannot, intervene in human affairs to avert tragedy and suffering. At most, He offers us His divine comfort and expresses His divine anger when horrible things happen to people. G-d, in the face of tragedy, is impotent. The most G-d can do is to stand on the side of the victim; not the executioner."

Kushner also asserted that “the purpose of religion is that it should make us feel good about ourselves,” and if it doesn’t, it has failed in its mission.

I walk a fine line here because as a rabbi who has been in the “consolation business” for over a half a century, the last thing I would ever do is discount the feelings of anyone who endured the tragedy that Kushner and his wife did. However, despite his own theological training and good intentions, the rabbi’s response to this existential question about how to deal with suffering and evil is not a Jewish, or even a religious, response. Nor is it psychologically satisfying.

Like Rabbi Kushner, [I have also experienced tremendous tragedy in my life.](https://aish.com/why-god-why/) When I was 38 years old, [my 36-year-old wife passed away suddenly and unexpectedly,](https://aish.com/why-god-why/) leaving me a widower with many children to raise on my own. Along with being a married couple and parents of 11 children, my wife and I were also partners in teaching and directing our local Jewish day-school. With Rochel Leah’s passing, our community lost a teacher, a mentor, and a guiding light. I also lost my rock and my partner in love and life.

 

**From left to right: Rabbi Gershon Schustrman and Rabbi Harold Kushner**

**Bottom of Form**

In my pain, I began to dig deeper for Judaism’s answers to the existence of evil and tragedy, and how we are meant to view it. I learned that we are not the center of the universe—G-d is. If there is a G-d, the central mission of humankind is to find Him, to get to know Him, and to serve Him. The word *G-d*evokes in some a sense of exaltedness, etherealness and distance. This needs to change. The wisdom and disciplines of Judaism make G-d relatable, enabling us to expand our sense of self through diminishing our ego and creating a personal, dynamic relationship with G-d. This lifelong exploratory journey *is* the destination, one that can be fulfilling and even exciting.

We all want to feel good about ourselves—healthy self-regard is important. But feeling good about ourselves is not the purpose of religion. It is a by-product of a life lived purposefully, with G-d as one’s ballast and compass. Each of us will be bruised by life’s bitter challenges at one time or another. G-d wants to be at our side, helping to steer us through life’s traumas and storms without keeling. But if we are the center of our universe, and believe that stopping evil and heartbreak is above G-d’s pay grade, then a life well-lived means nothing more than that the one who ends up with the most toys, wins.



**Rabbi Gershon Schustrman and his family before his wife died and he became a Single parent of eleven children**

Kushner once acknowledged that understanding tragedy boils down to only two possibilities: G-d’s will or bad luck. In Kushner’s view, it was bad luck. G-d doesn’t run the world, leaving us all vulnerable to chance, nihilism, or fate. A neutered G-d could only offer comfort during moments of crisis. But this approach makes human suffering meaningless and purposeless, with human beings as hapless victims. Judaism believes that life has meaning. Therefore, human suffering must also have a meaning.

The trauma of tragedy can understandably cause one to become myopic in their pain. They can feel that nobody else can understand or help—not even G-d. This closes the door on G-d, telling Him, "Don't mix into my pain; You can't help me anyway!"

As I found in my own experience and through counseling and consoling hundreds of others, I know that our greatest possible comfort and way forward through grief is to submit to the Master of the Universe and let Him in. When I made my relationship with G-d a more personal one, I was no longer relating to the “To-Whom-it-may-Concern-G-d” but to the G-d who knows me and cares for me; I’m no longer alone in my travail.

[Struggling with G-d](https://aish.com/when-bad-things-happen-judaisms-first-approach-to-wrestling-with-suffering/) and trusting in G-d are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be complementary. The very name of the Jewish people is Israel, which means to struggle with G-d. Abraham and Moses challenged G-d’s tough justice and their ongoing difficult life tests. King David did the same through the Psalms. Crying out to G-d, challenging G-d, and demanding His help are signs of a secure relationship that can handle the friction.

If a person can cry out to G-d about their enormous problems, a person can also tell their problems how great G-d is. We may be incapable of embracing Him in all His greatness, but that doesn’t stop Him from embracing us. We can grant Him authorship of what we are going through and recognize that there is ultimate meaning and purpose in our pain.

We are not victims of chance. As King David wrote in [Psalms 91:16](https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.91.16?lang=he-en&utm_source=aish.com&utm_medium=sefaria_linker), “I—G-d—am with him—the sufferer—in his distress.” In this way, we can lean on G-d to give us strength to find purpose and meaning in this dismal chapter, and the resilience to endure what we have been dealt, confident that ultimately, we can carry on with purpose and even optimism.

Reprinted from the May 14, 2023 website of aish.com

**The Disgraced Woman’s Successful Cry of Anguish**

**By**[**Yossi Ives**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/9055/jewish/Ives-Yossi.htm)

Rivka Heller was a fine young woman with a noble dream: she hoped to marry a scholar and raise children who would be a credit to her own heritage. Born around 200 years ago in Belarus, then part of the Russian Empire, on her mother’s side she was a great-granddaughter of the illustrious Rabbi Yomtov Lipman Heller, revered author of a treasured commentary to the Mishnah.

Rivka’s father, a businessman who owned a store, became embroiled in a dispute with a fellow trader who turned out to be viciously vindictive. When the matter was not resolved to his satisfaction, the antagonist spread salacious rumors about Rivka and a patron of her father’s store. Tragically, the rumor was widely believed, and although of marriageable age, no worthy suitors were forthcoming. Rivka was devastated, feeling that she was being treated as a pariah due to no fault of her own.

After years of waiting, her father finally approached Rivka with the only matrimonial proposal he had received. It was from Aaron Heller (no relation to the family), an assistant coachman known as “Aaron the Whipper (Shmeiser in Yiddish).”



*Art by*[*Sefira Lightstone*](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

Rivka was crestfallen. What kind of a proposal was that? How would marriage to a simple coachman allow her to raise the kind of children she dreamed of?

But as there were simply no other options, Rivka consented. She decided that she would honor and love her husband regardless, and would make the best of the situation. However, inside, she seethed with indignation. A malicious lie had tainted her reputation and caused her such brutal humiliation. A callous act had stolen her dream.

On the day of her wedding, Rivka retreated to a side room where she turned to G‑d in anguish. “Bring salvation to those whose souls have been disgraced!” she beseeched, recalling the words from the blessings recited after the haftarah reading.

She poured out her heart and lay her plight in [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm)’s hands: “Dear G‑d, I only had one dream: to marry a Torah scholar. This was cruelly stolen from me and I was publicly disgraced. I accept my future husband and will honor him to the best of my ability. You now need to come to my rescue and return what was taken from me.”

Rivka and Aaron married and together they created a good marriage. Yet every Friday night before lighting her Shabbat candles, Rivka allowed herself a moment of sorrow and would recite her prayer “Bring salvation to those whose souls have been disgraced.” She would remind G‑d that she was relying on Him to repair the harm done to her and ensure that [Torah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1426382/jewish/Torah.htm) remain present in her family.

And her prayers were answered.

Rivka and Aaron had four sons, all outstanding Torah scholars and authors of important works of Torah scholarship: Rabbi Yehoshua Heller, Rabbi Yisroel Heller of Koidinov and Rabbi Meir Heller of Vilna.

The second youngest, Rabbi Yechiel Heller, a prodigy, was appointed rabbi of Hlusk, Belarus, at just 21. He went on to serve in several prestigious rabbinic positions throughout Belarus, Poland and Lithuania, establishing a reputation as a leading halachic authority and authoring numerous important books before his premature death at 47 years of age.

Yechiel internalized his mother’s pain and signed all his books and letters with the title “the disgraced,” a highly unusual identifier, referring to the calumny against his mother. This author only knows of one other rabbi who referred to himself by that term, Rabbi Eliezer Chaim ben Eliezer from Austria, who lived around half a millennium earlier.

**Dedicated His Books to His Parents**

Rabbi Heller dedicated his two most important books to his parents, something extremely uncommon in rabbinic literature. He even refers to his father as “our master, the rabbi,” even though his father was but a simple man.

Moreover, he incorporated the word “ohr” into the name of both those books. In the introductions, he explains that it is an acronym for Aaron and Rivka, his parents. It is clear that Yechiel wanted to make his parents proud and restore his mother’s dignity. In fact, he named his most important work Amudei *[Ohr](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2788328/jewish/Everywhere-Revealed.htm" \o "Everywhere Revealed)*,“Pillars of Aharon and Rivka,” hoping to elevate their standing in the eyes of the world.

Rivka not only merited to raise four distinguished scholars and teachers, but she also had a son who was deeply moved by his mother’s trauma and held his parents’ honor dear to his heart. Rabbi Yechiel Heller was a true credit to his mother’s nobility of spirit. Indeed, Rivka’s anguish didn’t go unnoticed, and her dream was fulfilled. Salvation did come to “the disgraced.”

Scripture is replete with stories of noble women—from Rachel to Chana—who cried out to G‑d in anguish, their prayers answered in spectacular fashion. Rivka Heller is another pious and noble woman in the long chain of tradition from whom we learn the true meaning of prayer: ask for the impossible, because to G‑d nothing is out of reach.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Chabad.Org Translated and adapted from She’al Avicha Viyagedcha, vol. II, by Rabbi Shalom Schwadron, maggid of Jerusalem, quoting Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon.*